



INDIGENOUS CULTURE IN VIETNAMESE RICE PACKAGING DESIGN - A COMPARABLE VIEW WITH SOME ASIA COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Conveying the brand image of the rice industry through product packaging design is a matter of concern for many businesses in Vietnam, especially in the context of developing international and regional economic integration.

The research of rice packaging design conveying typical cultural identities of each region and locality has long been invested and focused by the world's leading food brands. This helps the product brand make a strong impression and associate indigenous cultural values to consumers through the product.

Rice packaging design with indigenous style is an important factor creating competitiveness and a unique mark for product brands and businesses, especially when Vietnam is opening to the world. Products with high quality, distinctive marks and high aesthetics are reasonable demands. The investment in designs with Vietnamese identity helps increase brand recognition and product value, helps increase the consumer value of the product, creates an identity mark, and helps Vietnamese product brands have their own advantages.

KEYWORDS: graphic arts, packaging design, indigenous culture, cultural characteristics, color in packaging design, images, illustrations.

CONTENT:

1. Indigenous culture characteristics in rice packaging designs:

Using graphic elements to convey indigenous cultural characteristics on food packaging in general and rice packaging in particular is becoming a leading concern in the creative industry and the food industry in Vietnam, especially when Vietnam is fully opening the retail market, requiring products with high competitiveness in terms of quality, imprint and unique aesthetics.

Indigenous culture is understood as the culture of a community, a nation in a certain locality, area or region. The characteristics of the indigenous culture are the cultural identities of that locality.¹

Cultural characteristics conveyed on rice packaging have a great impact on customers' perception of product images. This is a challenge for designers when it comes to studying cultural differences, trends or psychological values, when using graphic elements to convey design.

The study of cultural similarities or differences in each region, each country helps product brands easily penetrate and succeed in the trend of globalization.

Indigenous cultural characteristics in rice packaging design are the extraction of traditional cultural and artistic elements, customs and habits, geographical conditions, people, psychology, regional characteristics, and indigenous production process... through graphic elements to create modern designs but still contain national cultural characteristics, indigenous characteristics, and unique imprints of each region and each country.

The transmission of indigenous cultural characteristics in the design of rice packaging helps the expressions of indigenous identity become more and more abundant, under the perspective of modern graphics. Rice packaging design also helps consumers better understand the culture and create modern and unique designed products.

Like other kinds of arts, graphic design also varies from culture to culture and is particularly influenced by the culture, norms, and historical values of each country. This is clearly seen in food packaging designs in general and rice packaging in particular. The aesthetics of the packaging are different due to the impact of different indigenous cultural factors.



Figure 1: Sample of Japanese Riceman rice packaging with the idea of gratitude to rice farmers²

In Japan, cultural and artistic characteristics are clearly expressed through advertising products, cartoons, video games... and packaging design products. It is a country with great influence on culture and arts. Graphic designs with traditional colors are heavily exploited due to the influence of traditional Japanese cultural arts. Rice packaging designs often have their own characteristics, with a new approach that is completely different from other Asian countries. Packaging designs are often very diverse, which is the continuation between traditional arts and new creations from Japanese culture, so Japanese design products often have distinctive and impressive characteristics.

Rice is one of the most popular and widely consumed cereals in the world, while in the past packaging designs were often overlooked, today it is an indispensable element in rice brand promotion of each country.

Riceman is a Japanese rice brand which design is inspired by the gratitude of Japanese farmers who have worked hard to produce delicious rice grains. It is a packaging design that both conveys a message full of humanity and displays functional elements on its product packaging. Visually, the packaging model depicts the facial expressions of farmers, conveying the diverse emotional states that farmers experience. In terms of form and size, there are 2 types of small bags for short rice grains and large bags for long ones. The material used is burlap combined with carton to form the shape of the traditional palm-leaf conical hat of Asian farmers and to function as a rice measuring tool. The portrait illustrations and information on the packaging are used calligraphically to emphasize the origin of this cereal.

Meanwhile in China, one of the civilizations is considered to be the earliest with human society, spanning more than 4000 years. This is a country with a long history of culture and arts. Chinese graphic designs have their own characteristics,

quite unique compared to western countries. China always promotes creative ideas and new technologies in artistic creation, so cultural art products and applied design products are always full of cultural consciousness and national characteristics. That is clearly seen from the application of traditional arts in modern graphic design products.



Figure 2: Samples of Chinese rice packaging using traditional patterns and printing methods³

During the integration period, Chinese graphic design was also heavily influenced by the West due to the copying of elements from different cultures into Chinese graphic design products. However, traditional cultural values are always hidden and become the focus of modern design products. For example, the exploitation of calligraphy arts, festivals, and traditional patterns are used in modern rice packaging designs.

In Guizhou province - China, people still apply ancient rice growing techniques to create the best organic rice without chemicals, industrial lines or modern packaging methods. Qians organic rice packaging is designed as a gift with locally produced paper. The style towards nature is expressed by hand- printing patterns and information on the packaging. The design is especially eco-friendly and bearing the mark of traditional indigenous production.

In India, it is a country known for its diverse and distinct culture, where energetic, unique graphic expressions are expressed through art products and designs including rice packaging design with simple and familiar shapes, vibrant and happy colors.

Rice has a great spiritual and ceremonial significance as it is the staple food in the life of the Indian people. Each locality will produce different delicious rice varieties. India is also home to many types of folklore that have evolved over the centuries. India's Abirami rice brand has skillfully combined the traditional folk art form of the locality associated with the origin of that indigenous rice into the rice packaging design, creating a brand identity, strongly associated with the origin of rice products. The packaging design connects consumers to the pure sanctity of the art form and the origin of the rice grain, strongly spreading Indian cultural and artistic characteristics.



Figure 3: Sample of rice packaging that captures the characteristics of traditional Indian folk arts⁴

It is clear that different cultures around the world have different histories, customs, beliefs, and characteristics. This is evident in art works and graphic design products.

Exploiting indigenous cultural characteristics into rice packaging designs requires designers to have a thorough understanding and research, which helps the packaging design to imprint their mark and distinctive characteristics, creating an advantage to help promote product brands and build a national brand image.

2. The necessity of conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in Vietnamese rice packaging design:

Research on packaging design with specific cultural identities of each region has long been invested and focused by the world's leading food brands. This helps create a strong impression and aligns with indigenous cultural values.

Investing in design with Vietnamese identity helps increase brand recognition and product value, creating an identity mark that helps Vietnamese product brands have their own advantages.

Graphic design of food packaging has a specific social function. This is also one of the important criteria in assessing the scientific, technical, aesthetic and cultural level of a country. The application of graphic elements in rice packaging design not only helps to enhance the aesthetic values and consumer values of the product, but it also has an important function in preserving and spreading the traditional culture of each region and country. That promotes the connection of consumers and society with traditional cultural characteristics, of different ethnic groups or cultural regions in the country or abroad.

For thousands of years, people have cultivated and eaten rice. Originated in Asia through the rice trade, rice has been transported to many places around the world, so rice packaging is a very important factor in the transportation, preservation and brand marketing function nowadays.

Rice packaging designs are always researched to attract consumers' visuals and convey cultural characteristics through factors such as colors, materials, designs, illustrations on the packaging.

Rice packaging has a great influence in the production and commercialization of products. In addition to preserving and protecting rice during transportation and consumption, packaging also has the effect of providing information, improving consumers' aesthetic awareness and it is one of the factors to identify a rice brand. Vietnam's rice packages will normally be divided into consumptive (direct) packaging forms with the following quantities less than 5kg, 5kg, 10kg, 20kg, 25kg packed in bags, boxes, or packages of rice; and transshipment (indirect) packaging forms with the quantities of 25kg or over usually contained in packages for convenience during transportation and consumption.

In food products, rice production is one of the key commodities with position both in export and domestic consumption. However, the previous rice packaging designs have not been focused on product design. While international packaging tends to be simplified with elegant colors, many Vietnamese rice packaging designs have been designed with vibrant colors, decreasing the ability to recognize and the aesthetics.

Determining the status and importance of graphic design of food packaging, more and more domestic enterprises have focused on investing in packaging graphic design to increase the competitiveness of their products.



Figure 4: Packaging of Vinaseed's Ban Mai Rice (Central Seed Company)⁵

The transformation in business orientation focuses on not only exporting but also improving product quality and the aesthetics of product packaging. The research for packaging graphic design is clearly seen on the packaging of rice products at Foodexpo 2017 Vinaseed (Central Seed Company). It is one of the typical exam-

ples that have focused on investing in product packaging design and color. Ban Mai rice packaging has brightened up a corner of product introduction. With the typical yellow color of Ban Mai rice along with reasonable packaging and design, using bright modern images and colors, it can be said that Vinaseed has brought a new look to the rice group in Vietnam.

* Conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in the design of rice packaging helps to improve the aesthetic values and consumer values of the product.

The charm and attractiveness of products always make an impression on consumers at first sight. Conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in graphic design of packaging is one of the important factors to create a beautiful packaging, adding aesthetic values and helping the product brand to have its own mark. It is an important factor in creating long-term and durable competition.

Hoa nang (Sunflower) is a Vietnamese rice brand born with the mission of bringing quality and classy rice products to consumers. Creativity has been shown right from the packaging. Hoa nang is blowing a new and unique breeze into Vietnamese rice products. By choosing a light yellow tone, together with the illustration of a Vietnamese farmer holding a bunch of rice with a smile on his lips after a hard-working day, the designer has created a vivid picture of a bountiful harvest with the image of rice fields. Hoa nang has created an idyllic picture of people and a scene of enthusiastic labor of Vietnamese farmers, working hard to produce delicious rice grains. The productive labor characteristics of Vietnamese farmers are reflected on Hoa nang rice packaging, which makes the packaging model not only full of aesthetics but also interesting with typical production characteristics.



Figure 5: Vietnam's Hoa Nang rice packaging is inspired by the image of an enthusiastic Vietnamese farmer⁶

* Conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in rice packaging design helps to recognize product brands and national brands.

Using graphic elements conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in rice packaging design helps to create a difference to recognize and distinguish the rice brand, especially highlighting the product in a variety of similar products. This requires research on indigenous culture, customs, and in-depth understanding before designing a suitable packaging model for the market and target customer group.

It is very important to study the cultural characteristics of each region, helping designers to identify whether the emotional ideas contained in each design element (colors, images, illustrations, materials, etc.) suitable or not. Is it possible to show the unique characteristics of each region?



Figure 6: Vietnam's Seng cu Muong Khuong rice packaging is inspired by the image of terraced rice fields and people in the Northwest highlands⁷

Seng Cu Muong Khuong rice, also known as Xen Cu rice, is a specialty of the Northwest mountainous region of Vietnam with especially delicious and flexible rice grains. Seng Cu rice is grown in high mountainous valleys (Dien Bien, Lao Cai, Yen Bai ...) where the rice grains are grown on hilly land and irrigated with highland spring water, so the rice grains are delicious and have a characteristic flavor. Seng Cu Muong Khuong rice is grown at an altitude of 2000m above sea level. When milled, rice grains have a green color like nuggets, a long size and a distinctive scent. This is a special feature of Seng Cu Muong Khuong rice compared to other types of rice.

The design of Seng Cu Muong Khuong rice packaging is inspired by the typical agricultural land of the Northwest where the rice is grown on terraced fields and planted by farmers in the Northwest highland community. The packaging design uses the green color of the mountains and the nature in mountainous areas, together with the yellow color of the terraced fields in the harvest season. Interwoven in the packaging is the illustration of a Dao Do woman watching the fruits of labor as bountiful fields in the ripe rice season. The packaging design represents the origin and cultural beauty of the Vietnamese community in the Northwest highlands.

Obviously, the designs that study indigenous factors help customers remember the specific characteristics of the product, the region. Moreover, they promote the image of the product brand and national brand.

3. Elements that convey indigenous cultural characteristics in rice packaging design:

Color in rice packaging design:

In terms of graphic design, color has great visual appeal. Color has the ability to psychologically affect people in the form of associations. For example, blue color evokes the image of the sky, orange and red evoke images of the sun, warmth, etc. Thanks to these associations, designers can better and more accurately turn their ideas into products.

Using colors in rice packaging design depends on the nature and content of the product, the culture and tradition of each region and each nation.

The design of Tanoush Emperor rice packaging is inspired by Indian myths, in which the finest grains of rice are carried on horseback to the king. Dark tones are used in the design to portray the sophistication and unique of the product. The mystery of the myths also brings its own cultural characteristics that are transmitted into the design of Indian rice packaging.



Figure 7: Using dark colors to create a mystery based on the inspiration from Indian myths in Tanoush rice brand⁸

Color is considered as the most important factor to make a difference to recognize and distinguish food products, especially to highlight products in countless products of the same type. Using color on rice packaging requires research on products, customs, production processes, etc. When choosing colors to convey the brand, the emotional characteristic of each color is one of the important factors. Determining whether the emotional meaning underlying each color matches the message the brand wants to convey is an important consideration. The packaging design of Tanoush organic rice brand has succeeded in conveying a message "Each grain of rice creates a story" with its own imprint.

Taiwanese rice packaging has the ability to make a very good visual impression. The design focuses on simplicity, using elegant colors with lots of white space cleverly coordinated to create a strong impression and a very interesting story about the season.



Figure 8: Bright tones are popular in rice packaging design in Taiwan⁹

The colors in Vietnamese rice packaging designs are mostly bright colors that are simulated, reminiscent of nature: yellow of rice, green of the young rice sprout, brown of arable land, blue of the sky...

The use of visual colors in Organic Rice products "Hoa nang – Vang lua chin" and "Hoa nang – Xanh ma non", the packaging designs use colors that simulate the yellow color of the ripe yellow rice field and the green color of the young rice sprout. During the growth period, the colors are visually more vivid, combined with the image of Vietnamese people happily greeting high-quality and delicious rice grains.



Figure 9: Using simulated colors in Vietnam's Hoa Nang rice packaging design¹⁰

The transmission of indigenous cultural characteristics in packaging design also depends a lot on customs, lifestyles, people and traditional cultural characteristics of each region. The color of products bearing the mark of each region will be different because the aesthetic tastes of each region are different, as the West is often represented by basic colors such as red, blue, pink... and Northern mountainous areas are often represented by deep colors such as purple, dark purple, blue... Each product in different regions has different colors.

A design can change colors in stages to create appeal, but it must follow the principle of consistency in brand identity. The impact of color in rice packaging design is very diverse, so it is very important to study how color conveys cultural characteristics in rice packaging design.

Illustration, stylized decoration conveying cultural characteristics in rice packaging design:

Studying stylized decorative motifs and illustrations in rice packaging design requires designers to have a broad view and a deep understanding of culture, lifestyles, customs and traditional farming practices of each region and country, thereby introducing stylized decorative elements showing indigenous characteristics on the packaging.

The illustrations on rice packaging include the use of drawings, photographs, lines, blocks, symbols, icons, and characters in a variety of ways to create a rich visual language and a visual stimulation¹¹.

On rice packaging, simple visual images help consumers grasp the message the product wants to convey faster. Metaphorical images not only create interest but also make the association and recognition take place longer.

Most of Vietnamese rice packaging often use visual images: heads of grain, rice grains, rice bags, rice bowls, labor processes, etc. to help consumers immediately associate the aroma and taste of each kind of rice.

The illustrations on rice packaging (photographs, drawings, or both) help create an early recognition, attracting the attention of consumers, playing as a factor to distinguish products among countless products of the same type.

The illustrations on rice packaging help lead consumers to better understand the product origin, indigenous production process, or traditional cultural values of each region or each nation.



Figure 10: Using illustrative elements that suggest the origin of Hat ngoc troi – Phuong hoang rice¹²

Hat ngoc troi brand has launched a high-class rice product line called Phuong hoang. Hat ngoc troi phuong hoang is a delicious kind of rice that is selected and cultivated by Loc Troi Group on the fertile land in Cambodia with the production and manufacturing process following a closed process that meets high standards. The kind of rice is clean and safe for health. When cooked, it keeps its characteristic aroma, flexible grain and deeply sweet taste. The illustrations on the rice packaging, in addition to the brand color characteristics, also use the image of pagodas and Cambodian language to remind the product origin.

The illustrations on rice packaging help to spread the outstanding characteristics and factors of the product to consumers in a subtle and artistic way, thereby creating associations to help promote the product consumption process.

Healthy Food Healthy Life rice brand (Thailand) launched a new non-toxic and environmentally friendly product line which is developed based on the needs of new customers who have a demand for organic rice with high nutritional value. With daily-used rice produced in modern production lines, it is unlikely that this requirement can be guaranteed. The brand has researched and confirmed that the manual rice growing process without using machines will give better rice quality. The traditional way of growing rice of the ancient Thai people to have higher qual-

ity rice includes tilling with buffalo; preparing, planting, and harvesting by hand. To convey to customers the planting process and the concept of perfection in each grain of rice, Healthy Food Healthy Life brand has engraved images of the rice planting process: tilling, harvesting, and raking by hand... into a wooden block shaped like a grain of rice. The meticulous attention to detail is also a way to show the hard work and meticulousness of manual planting and production to bring to the market a delicious rice product.



Figure 11: The illustration on the packaging is a photograph of a traditional Thai farmer's production sculpture¹²

There are many ways to represent rice packaging illustrations, ranging from drawings to other means of expression, from simple lines to complex lines that can be sketched or done on a computer. Each method will be a new thing that conveys interesting new information. Photographs can also be used in black and white photos, color photos, photos combined with text, photos combined with illustrations to create distinct characteristics of each rice brand conveyed to consumers. On Vietnamese rice packaging, we can see the appearance of symbols (heads of grain) or representative characters (farmers), or symbols of bronze drums, migratory birds reminiscent of Vietnamese cultural origins.

The packaging design of Ngoc Long rice with the main illustration is the pattern on the bronze drum with the image of a migratory bird in the Au Lac, Van Xuan, Van Lang, Dai Viet rice products reminding of historical values and ancestral history.



Figure 12: Using visual elements to remind of the historical origins on Ngoc Long rice packaging¹⁴

The use and perception of images on rice packaging in each country has its own cultural characteristics and contains many interesting things. It is clear that the use of illustrations on rice packaging is very important not only in product recognition but also in conveying a message, a story about the product to consumers and above all it helps to convey traditional cultural values of each region, each nation.

Using text and layout forms to convey cultural characteristics in rice packaging design:

Text on rice packaging plays an important role in conveying information about products and labeling regulations.

In graphic design in general and in packaging design in particular, the use of text is very important. Text is not only used to convey the semantics of the manufac-

turer's message, but through the arrangement of the text layout, it can also create a hidden beauty. In other words, text also brings artistic values to the images and content on the product's package.

In rice packaging designs, text can be arranged horizontally, vertically, symmetrically or freely depending on the reading culture of each country. The text font is also extremely diverse, but it must match the overall packaging and create a rhythm for the product.

When sentences are deliberately arranged together with good use of color and layout, the design can achieve high efficiency in terms of both information and expression.

Text is usually placed at the center of rice packaging because this is where necessary information should be displayed. In the current consumer trend, text design as a mean of identification signs, decorations and illustrations on rice packaging is also very popular.

The correlation among letters and between the text and the background creates the layout. For text in rice packaging design, it is necessary to pay attention to relevant visual factors such as: lightness, thickness, size, position and arrangement (space between letters, words, or lines...)

Designers also pay attention to the presentation of text on the rice packaging. Product information is displayed neither too much nor too little, which does not cause confusion for customers while still ensuring the necessary information elements of the product.



Figure 13: Text used on Japanese rice packaging¹⁵

Japan is a country which the artistic traditions are imbued with its own identity. The quiet flowing meditation has breathed life into the packaging products, giving the products new and attractive packaging designs. Through materials, the Japanese have raised the simple packaging into a very unique culture. The use of text on Japanese packaging as well as packaging designs reflects the Japanese minimalist lifestyle. Decorative elements, redundant and distracting textures are minimized, combined with harmonious color tones. Japanese concept of creativity is simple and effective. A unique long-standing culture has been infused into paper packaging designs, creating an unmistakable Japanese character.

Using text on food packaging designs also helps convey the unique characteristics of each country. In Japanese rice packaging designs, text is placed at the center with moderate proportions, showing a minimalist style. In Chinese food packaging designs, text is frequently used, bringing interpretive nature of product information. Calligraphy is sometimes used on some packaging as the main design element to reflect traditional artistic characteristics.

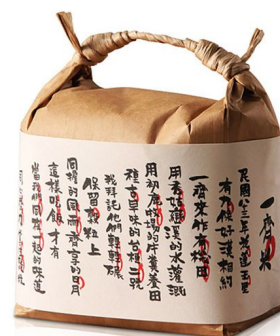


Figure 14: Chinese rice packaging uses calligraphy as the main element in the design¹⁵

In most Vietnamese rice packaging designs, text is displayed at the center position with a large proportion, interpreting the content of information about the product. On some packages, text is sometimes used as the main design element that allows recognition of the product image.



Figure 15: Rice packaging of Saigon Trading Company with text in the center position¹⁷

With the purpose of giving customers necessary information about the product, text involves in conveying a cultural characteristic of each region, each country. Some text designs reflect the brand's characteristics, gradually becoming exclusive and embedded in all brand identity systems.

The selective use and combination of text, colors and illustrations on rice packaging not only create high efficiency in design, aesthetics, and uniqueness, but also help convey indigenous cultural characteristics to consumers. Packaging designs do not only focus on the function as a container, but also convey hidden distinct cultural characteristics that are preserved and spread to the community.

CONCLUSION:

Conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in Vietnamese rice packaging designs is extremely necessary, especially when the trend of globalization is taking place in all fields: culture, health, education, arts ... and application design products.

The study of conveying indigenous cultural characteristics in rice packaging design is approached from the perspective of modern graphics, helping consumers better understand the culture, customs and habits of each region. That also partly reflects the change in aesthetic perception and design trends during this period. Graphic elements are not only to focus on product recognition and differentiation, but also to convey a message, a spiritual value and indigenous cultural characteristics to help the product brand have a distinct impression, strong attraction and spread artistic and cultural values to the community.

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